THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

Funding for National Highways Project

3210. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether funding for National Highways Projects through NHAI is keeping pace with the projected requirements;

(b) whether the Capital Expenditure through NHAI for the year 2004-05 projected at Rs. 9000/- Crores is less than the previous years' allocations;

(c) if so, the reasons therefor;

(d) whether the foreign direct investment in road transport and highway sector during the past year has not been substantial; and

(e) if so, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) the expenditure is projected based on requirement of the projects as per project cycle. However, there is no short fall in progress of the projects.

(d) and (e) The foreign direct investment is made in the from of equity/ debt by the concessionaire of BOT/Annuity projects. It is not received by the Authority.

Smart-Licence Plates

3211. SHRI S. K. KHABIR UDDIN AHMED: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Supreme Court has recently gave a verdict on use of 'Smart license plates' in every vehicle;

(b) if so, how many millions of persons, who are painting and/or engraving license plates at present would become redundant; and

(c) the proposal of Government for alternative source of earnings for persons who would become redundant?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI K.H. MUNIYAPPA): (a) The Hon'ble Supreme Court have upheld the rules for introduction of High Security Registration Plates *vide* their judgment dated 30.11.2004.

(b) The Ministry has no information in this regard.

(c) the objective underlying the introduction of High Security Registration Plates is to enhance safety of vehicles on the roads through improved visibility as also improve the security of vehicles by introducing a number of security feature in Registration Plates, which would make removal, tampering or counterfeiting of such plates difficult. It has nothing to do with employment.

Development of Indian Ports

3212. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that we are lagging far behind in the development of Indian ports and in providing them with basic facilities of international standard as compared to that of China and East Asia;

(b) whether it is also a fact that despite the various effects the waiting period of ships is twice as compared to that of the said countries;

(c) if so, the details of the efforts made by Government for the development of Indian ports; and

(d) if not, the comparative details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING, ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) There is no reliable system of benchmarking and/or universally accepted set of parameters on the basis of which the performance of various ports could be juxtaposed for arriving at definitive conclusions. However, in spite of steady improvement in the performance and efficiency of the major ports in India, these still lag behind globally comparable standards.

(c) Development of the major ports in India is an on-going process keeping in view the demands of maritime trade. An outlay of Rs. 4531.29 crore has been provided under the Tenth Plan for Development of the major